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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2862/01 2491934
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 051934Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9245
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002862

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/05/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: KIRKUK ISSUE HEIGHTENS TENSIONS
IN TUZ

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2420
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2503

Classified By: Team Leader Richard Bell; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Salah ad Din reporting cable.

Summary

[1](#)2. (C) For Salah ad Din (SaD) residents, the Kirkuk Provincial Council's (PC's) call for Kirkuk to join the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has proved to be a very emotive issue. This is a particularly sensitive issue in the SaD district of Tuz, which historically belonged to Kirkuk, and where Kurds outnumber Arabs. Some SaD PC Kurdish members stopped attending the PC following its rejection of a proposal to return Tuz to Kirkuk. Many SaD Arabs have asserted they would take up arms if necessary to defend fellow Arabs in Kirkuk because of shared tribal relations and to defend Iraq's national territory. Despite these tensions, Tuz remains relatively stable, though vulnerable to spillover in the event of ethnic or sectarian violence in neighboring provinces (Tuz borders on both Kirkuk and Diyala). Residents' complaints focus on inadequate public services such as water and electricity. End Summary.

Kinship Ties Between Arabs In SaD And Kirkuk

[1](#)3. (C) Sunni Arab Provincial officials have stated repeatedly to USG officials that SaD Arabs would take up arms if necessary to defend their brother Arabs and fellow tribe members in Kirkuk, and cautioned that conflict between Arabs and Kurds could be worse than Sunni-Shi'a conflict. One tribe in particular, the Juboor, has a large presence in both SaD and the Hawija area of Kirkuk; groups from both areas have held joint demonstrations to protest against the idea of Kurdish annexation of Kirkuk. To many SaD Sunni Arabs, loss of Kirkuk would be an unacceptable encroachment on Iraq's national integrity (REF A, B).

[1](#)4. (C) SaD Arabs are fearful that Kurdish encroachment will extend to the SaD district of Tuz (REF B). Located northeast of the Hamrin Mountains, Tuz is geographically isolated from the rest of SaD Province. Unlike the rest of the province, which is predominantly Sunni Arab, Tuz is largely populated by Kurds and Turcomen, with relatively few Arab villages. Tuz was part of Kirkuk until SaD Province was created in [1](#)1976. UNAMI is looking at Tuz because it is adjacent to Kirkuk and could be impacted dramatically if Kirkuk's administrative status were to change.

Possible PC Boycott by Tuz Kurds

[1](#)5. (C) The SaD PC met in March 2008, at the GOI's request, to discuss Article 140 execution, including the possibility of returning Tuz to Kirkuk. During the discussion, serious disagreement arose over the fate of Tuz. According to

accounts from some non-Tuz PC members, following the debate several hard-line Kurdish PC members from Tuz stopped participating regularly in PC meetings. Those same members, the PRT has heard, were incensed more recently by SaD's rejection of the Kirkuk PC's vote in favor of integration into the KRG. However, Tuz PC members and officials deny these reports, and claim there has been no boycott by any PC member from Tuz. The Tuz District Council Chairman admitted that there were some problems with meeting attendance due to scheduling conflicts, but insisted that the PC would resume regular meetings with full attendance in September. Mr. Ali Askar of the Islamic Turcomen Union of Iraq (an Iraqi Turcomen Front (ITF)-affiliated party) initially told the PRT that he had not heard of the boycott, but after doing his own checking admitted that there had been some absences due to "carelessness" of some Tuz PC members. Most other Tuz PC members (Turcomen, Arab, Christian, and some of the Kurds) have attended PC meetings regularly.

Sources of Instability in Tuz

¶6. (C) According to local officials in Tuz, recent outside tensions in Kirkuk and Diyala have more potential to destabilize the area than internal conflicts within Tuz. In regard to internal sources of instability, the Nahiya Director of Suleiman Bek, who is also a Provincial Council member, told the PRT that among the competing ethnic and sectarian forces, it is the ITF, and not the Kurdish influence, that he most fears as a source of instability in Tuz. The PRT has one member stationed in Tuz; he has seen little overt ethno-sectarian tension and reports that

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relations among the various ethnic groups are relatively stable. Tuz residents are quick to point out that their primary complaints relate to the lack of reliable delivery of services like electricity and water, rather than more abstract political concerns about ethnic tensions and the future political status of their district.

Comment

¶7. (C) Prospects for inter-ethnic violence in Tuz are mitigated for now by the fact that many Turcomen there are Shi'a and tend to place their religious identity ahead of their ethnic identity. That could change if the national Shi'a parties were to take a harder line against the Kurds.
End Comment.
BUTENIS